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## BRECKLAND COUNCIL

### At a Meeting of the

### CABINET

Held on Tuesday, 25 November 2014 at 11.00 am in  
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

#### PRESENT

Mr M. A. Wassell (Chairman)	Mrs E. M. Jolly
Mrs L.S. Turner (Vice-Chairman)	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr I. Sherwood
Councillor E. Gould	

#### Also Present

Mrs S.M. Matthews	Mr P.J. Duigan
Mr M J Nairn	Councillor M. Chapman-Allen
Mr T R Carter	

#### In Attendance

Julie Kennealy	- Executive Director (Place) (S151 Officer)
Anna Graves	- Chief Executive
Pam Sayle	- Corporate Consultation and Communications Officer
Robert Walker	- Assistant Director Community
Vicky Thomson	- Democratic Services & Legal Manager
Julie Britton	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mike McCabe	- Communications Manager
Laura Apps-Green	- Pride & Grants Officer
Paul Corney	- Head of ARP

#### Action By

#### **100/14 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **101/14 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

None.

#### **102/14 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None.

#### **103/14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None.

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**104/14 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Mesdames Matthews and Chapman-Allen and Messrs T Carter, P Duigan and M Nairn.

**105/14 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

Members were reminded of the Member Briefing on 4 December 2014. All were encouraged to attend. The Senior Committee Officer was asked to send a reminder to all Members.

**106/14 BRECKLAND COMMUNITY FUNDING APPLICATIONS (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Vice-Chairman and Executive Member for Community & Environmental Services informed the Cabinet that this report had been deferred from the Cabinet meeting on 22 October 2014 for further information. The recommendation from the Pride Board to approve the £20,000 funding request from Thetford Community Association to recruit a Community Support Officer to tackle fly-tipping in Thetford still remained.

The Assistant Director of Community provided Members with the background to the report and explained that the questions raised at the previous meeting as requested had been addressed. A copy of the original report had been attached to the agenda.

Members were informed that Breckland Council remained the accountable body for grant funding projects. The top table highlighted on page 30 of the agenda provided a high level breakdown of how Serco's resources were deployed (on behalf of Breckland Council) in Thetford and across the District. Thetford had the greatest number of operatives and vans and Serco currently had to visit the Abbey Estate three times a week to remove fly-tipping and was increased to a daily visit during the school holidays. The second table highlighted the number of fly-tips in percentage terms collected from the Council's land (not from private land), 35% of which was from the Abbey Estate. Flagships figures had not been reflected in the above figures.

Enforcement action had been taken on a number of occasions in Thetford over the last twelve months, 31 investigations (8 on the Abbey Estate), 5 Fixed Penalty Notices issued (2 on the Abbey Estate) and 1 pending prosecution relating to fly-tipping (1 on the Abbey Estate).

There were a range of voluntary activities around the town led by residents and community groups who were actively involved in waste/recycling projects and litter picks. Flagship Housing currently employed community wardens to clear waste and litter from its land and it also assisted Breckland Council through Serco if it was identified that any of its tenants were fly-tipping and appropriate action was taken. Flagship also produced a Home File for all new tenants with particular reference to Anti-Social Behaviour and fly-tipping.

The recommendations were highlighted.

Members were asked to note that both Flagship Housing and Thetford Town Council would provide an "in kind" support for this project totalling £5,373

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(21.18%). Members were also asked to note that the Environmental Services Team had undertaken a similar pilot project on the Abbey Estate in 2013 to try and reduce fly-tipping levels and during the course of this project there was a reduction in residual waste collected. Since the service reviews of both Environmental Health and Environmental Service functions, no resource had been provided to carry out such a function and the relevant officer had been redeployed. However, whilst this would indicate that the project was successful, it could not be said with certainty that the reduction in residual waste collected had been of a direct consequence of reduced fly-tipping on the Abbey Estate.

The Executive Support Member for Finance, Assets and Strategic Development asked if the Council would have to take on the responsibility for the training of and the protection of this new person. Members were informed that such responsibilities would sit with the employing agency but the employee would work in conjunction with Breckland officers. The Executive Support Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development asked what this person would actually be doing, would he/she be walking around just looking for fly-tipping. She also mentioned two fly-tipping issues that had occurred in Swaffham that did not receive any assistance from the Council. The Assistant Director for Community explained that the person's role would involve talking to local residents and organisations to try and change the behaviours in Thetford, particularly on the estates. In terms of enforcement, the responsibility would remain with Breckland Council. The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development felt that the report clearly highlighted that there was a disproportionate issue in one of the towns and that Serco provided more assistance in Thetford than any other of Breckland's market towns which could be in relation to population. The report also highlighted the importance of working with partners; however, Flagship already employed community wardens that cleared waste from its land as well as the other organisations taking responsibility, Flagship also provided assistance to Breckland Council and Serco by reporting those who fly-tipped so why was a further person required. He raised a concern under section 1.13 of the report in relation to the Flagship Housing Home File which, in his opinion, made no reference to fly-tipping in the guidelines. He was not sure whether the Pride Board had been provided with relevant information to make such a decision and was positive that this appointment would not make any difference and was not the answer to the problems. The Assistant Director of Community explained that during the previous pilot scheme, there had been a 25% reduction in residual waste. The Executive Member for Planning, Building Control and Housing asked if £20,000 was all the funding that the organisation had for this project. In response, Members were informed that the total project cost was £25,373. Councillor Chapman-Allen was in attendance and had previously resided in Thetford and had been in contact with the Environmental Enforcement Officer concerned who had worked on the former pilot project who had implied that this pilot project would not make much difference. She asked if there had been any signs installed on the estates about the consequences of fly-tipping and she also asked how the funding would be monitored. The Assistant Director of Community explained that looking at the facts, there was a high level of fly-tipping in certain areas and one way of preventing this would be behavioural change. In terms of monitoring, the Thetford Community Association would have to provide a breakdown of how this award would be allocated and if it was not spent in the way it had been specified then Breckland Council would seek to recoup the

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grant monies. In response to the question about signage, he was not aware that any had been installed around the town. The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development added that the additional in kind support was in his opinion basically just an office for this person to sit in and felt that there were better ways to support such matters. The Executive Member for Democratic Services and Public Protection stated that dropping litter was classed as anti-social behaviour and felt that there should be more effective policing involved. He had noticed that there were six operatives, two vans and a sweeper dedicated to Thetford and felt that this was a great deal of resource just for one town. This was a community problem and he was concerned that Breckland Council would be seen to be giving grants towards wages and as this was the second pilot he also had concerns of how this was going to work. The Executive Member for Finance reminded the Cabinet that this was clearly a problem in Thetford and it was the view of the Pride Board that this project was appropriate and the proof would be in the outcome. She asked if there would be a co-ordinated approach with all concerned including the schools to educate the communities. Speaking on behalf of the Thetford Community Association, the Assistant Director of Community stated that this was how the application had been written. The Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development shared the concerns of the other Members but did believe that Breckland Council was caught between a 'rock and a hard place'. The money for this project was not coming from rate payers' pockets and the decision of the Pride Board, in his opinion, could not be overturned. The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development disagreed; Cabinet Members were responsible for how such monies should be spent.

The Chairman felt that this had been a very interesting debate and with this in mind he asked for a show of hands in favour of the application following which the recommendation was approved subject to the terms and conditions being put in place.

**Options**

- Not to grant the Pride in Breckland funding of £20,000 to the Thetford Community Association to run a pilot project and recruit a Community Support Officer to tackle fly-tipping in Thetford.
- To grant the Pride in Breckland funding of £20,000 to the Thetford Community Association to run a pilot project and recruit a Community Support Officer to tackle fly-tipping in Thetford.

**Reasons**

The report provided supplementary information requested at the Cabinet meeting on 22 October 2014 and makes a recommendation on the allocation of funding.

**RESOLVED** that the Pride Funding grant of £20,000 towards a £25,373 project for the Thetford Community Association to run a pilot scheme and recruit a Community Support Officer to tackle fly-tipping in Thetford be approved, subject to:

- a) confirmation that all other funding sources were in place;

**Laura  
Apps-  
Green,  
Robert  
Walker**

**Action By**

- b) a maximum of £20,000 or 78.82% of the cost of the project, whichever is the lower; and
- c) any other conditions arising from the Grant Panel's comments.

**107/14 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE QTR 2 14-15 AND DRAFT BUDGET  
MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

The Executive Member for Finance presented the report which provided Members with information on the forecast full year financial position of the Council as at 30 September 2014, together with the revised Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members were informed that Breckland Council was in a stronger financial position than expected.

The S151 Officer explained that the positive change on the Council's financial position and resulting removal on any planned dependency on reserves had been as a result of the combined effect of four main elements including, certainty around the impact of recently introduced changes to funding sources such as business rates retention, new homes bonus and council tax collection rates; timing in relation to earlier than planned implementation of a number of agreed savings; innovation, in relation to additional savings identified and implemented since the budget setting process and the economic climate with regard to the completion of some major new developments which in turn delivered further positive benefits under the new business rate retention scheme.

The S151 Officer thanked the Council for allowing her to inherit such a good financial position. She also conveyed her thanks and praised the Officers involved for the delivery of all the savings made. The combined effect of the above would allow the Council to consider balancing its budget across a longer term financial planning framework than previously possible.

Members' attention was drawn to page 20 of the agenda, the revised improved Medium Term Financial Plan. The figures depicted under the in-year budget gap, highlighted at 3a of the table, was when the budget had been set, under 3b, the in year revised budget gap highlighted the financial picture going forward which positively removed any dependency on reserves over the longer term, with the objective of reaching a sustainable financial position.

The S151 Officer asked the Chairman if recommendation number 4 could be removed as the appendix referred to in this recommendation had not been appended to the report. This document would be made available at the next Cabinet meeting.

The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development welcomed this good news, the fact that all the savings had been achieved proved that everyone had been working exceptionally hard throughout the year, and to have that need of £900k removed was very pleasing. He thanked everyone involved.

The recommendations were approved with the exception of recommendation

**Mark  
Finch,  
Julie  
Kennealy**

**Action By**

number 4 - that the review of revenue reserves be noted and the recommendations as detailed in appendix 2 be approved.

**Options**

- 1) To approve the recommendations as set out in the report, to note the report and appendix, approve the revenue virements as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and note the revised medium term financial position and use as a basis for setting the 2015-16 budget, to note the review of revenue reserves and approve the recommendations as detailed in Appendix 2 and approve that the capital budget carry-overs in Appendix 1 are considered as part of the budget process.
- 2) To approve some of the recommendations but not all of them.

**Reasons**

To provide timely information to Members on the overall finances of the Council and to make the best use of resources available, anticipating future year's expenditure.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the report and appendix be noted;
- 2) the revenue virements as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- 3) the revised medium term financial position be noted and agreed as the basis for setting the 2015-16 budget;
- 4) the capital budget carry-over requests of £2,314,595 to future years be noted and further considered as part of the budget process (as detailed in section 2 of the appendix); and
- 5) the changes to the Norfolk business rates pooling arrangements be noted.

**Julie  
Kennealy,  
Mark  
Finch**

**108/14 ARP ENFORCEMENT AGENCY REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report and explained that this initiative came to a head following the changes to Enforcement Agency fees; the scale of charges had been significantly increased. The Council wanted payment collection services to be ethical and equitable for all and wanted to continue to ensure that enforcement charges were only incurred by debtors as a measure of last resort after all reasonable attempts had been made to engage with those debtors to make arrangements. Operating an internal Enforcement Service would provide the best opportunity to ensure that standards of customer service were maintained throughout the payment collection process. This would represent an extension to the range of services currently operated and would further improve the value for money of service the Council received from the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP).

Paul Corney, the Head of ARP was in attendance to answer any questions.

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Members were informed by the Head of ARP that this Enforcement Agency service did offer the opportunity to offer a fair and equitable service by trying to help those that could not pay and enforce the ones that would not pay.

In response to a concern in relation to costs, the Head of ARP advised that a full business case had been presented to the ARP Joint Committee. If Members were mindful to approve the recommendation, the fees charged and recovered would be retained by the Councils involved and as such would benefit the council tax payers rather than having to be paid out in enforcement agency fees. It had been estimated that an income from fees of £150,000 would be shared between the partners.

**Options**

- 1) Do nothing.
- 2) To approve the recommendation to give delegated authority to create a shared Enforcement Agency service.

**Reasons**

A shared Enforcement Agency would offer:

- Direct control over quality and service standards of enforcement activity
- Engagement with debtors, where possible, to offer arrangement before enforcement fees became payable;
- A management model to offer future potential partners;
- Other benefits such as those detailed in the report; and
- A shared income on £150,000 per annum from Bailiff fees.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the recommendation of the ARP Joint Committee to introduce an Enforcement Agency Service be supported; and
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director (Place) in consultation with the appointed ARP Joint Committee Members to introduce a shared Enforcement Agency for the Anglia Revenues Partnership in accordance with the Business Case agreed by the Joint Committee.

**Paul  
Corney,  
Julie  
Kennealy**

**109/14 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development presented the new Communications Strategy. Breckland Council's responsibility to digital and social media had changed it had a duty to engage so that everyone had access to the information it provided. Members' attention was drawn to the figures on page 72 of the agenda in relation to the use of digital and social media channels. These figures were increasing every quarter with the largest increase in 2013 being adults of 65+ going online which rose by 25% in the year. There was also a cost saving feature to consider for various matters being carried out on line rather than having to have face to face or telephone conversation; the shift to digital communication would also over time reduce/eliminate printed paper

**Action By**

publications. The Executive Member believed that this was a very good report and the Strategy itself would be a live document which would be reviewed regularly against strategic priorities to ensure that it remained relevant to the Council's business.

The options were highlighted and the wording at the third recommendation, at the request of the Executive Member was changed to read: "that Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Commissioning and Governance in consultation with the Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development to make any functional changes required for effective implementation of the new Communications Strategy".

The Executive Member for Democratic Services and Public Protection thoroughly agreed with the general thrust of this Strategy as he believed that Breckland Council had been falling behind with businesses and the youth and further agreed that the Council should raise its game as far as Twitter etc were concerned.

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the fact that this Strategy was for both external customers and internal staff. She also drew attention to the costs highlighted at section 5.7.1 of the report and reminded Members that there would always be a cost as such a channel shift could require some investment. The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development advised that there would be no additional costs at this stage.

The Chairman reminded Members of the Council's investment for Better Broadband. The Executive Member for Finance stated that to have secured this funding for Broadband was excellent but pointed out that there would still be some areas that it would not reach. As far as this Strategy was concerned the App that would be made available would most probably be used by the younger generation but the downside to this would be that the public would expect a quicker response. The Executive Member for Democratic Services and Public Protection was certain that every person in Norfolk would be able to access 2mb of Broadband once the Better Broadband had been rolled out and would actually work for what the Council wanted it to do. The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development reminded Members that all written and spoken communications would not be forgotten.

**Options**

- 1) To agree the new Communication Strategy and associated actions in full
- 2) To agree the new Communications Strategy and associated actions in part
- 3) Do not agree the new Communications Strategy

**Reasons**

- To ensure Council communication activity directly supported delivery of the Corporate Plan.

- To ensure a clear and consistent set of priority messages reached key audiences.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the new Communications Strategy be approved;
- 2) the Action Plan as attached at Section 3 of the report be approved; and
- 3) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Commissioning and Governance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance and Development to make any functional changes required for effective implementation of the new Communications Strategy.

**110/14 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 13 January 2015 at 9.30am in the Anglia Room.

The Chairman thanked Members for their support throughout the year.

**Action By**

**Mike  
McCabe,  
Maxine  
O'Mahony**

The meeting closed at 11.59 am

CHAIRMAN